



Al-Risala 1992

October-November

The Fundamentals of Living

Reviewing modern Scientific Civilization, a commentator has made the very pertinent observation that it is not invested with ideological permanence. How true this seems when we consider that Ptolemy was replaced by Copernicus, Copernicus by Newton and Newton by Einstein.

The culture of the modern age has come to be called the 'culture of technology.' But this is a contradiction in terms, for culture, by its very nature, suggests permanence, a quality in which Science and Technology are sadly lacking. No culture based on technology can have the characteristics of permanence and can never, therefore, meet the eternal needs of human nature.

Technology is certainly of material service to man. It has taken us from the age of the plough to the age of the tractor. It has taken us from the bullock cart to the aeroplane. But it cannot form the basis of human culture. It cannot give man a civilization in the real sense of the word. Technology can, in a practical sense, serve man, but it cannot provide him with the spiritual mainspring of his life – a religion. The only thing which can do that for him is his culture.

If technology is life's conveyance, it is culture which determines man's destination. No real harm is done when the nature of the conveyance changes. What really does harm is the mindless sloughing off traditional morality, a process which erodes the very basis of our civilization, rendering life meaningless.

Technology in the sense of Science applied to man's practical requirements must never be allowed to shape man's destiny. So impermanent a feature of human existence must always be seen as a mere tool and never as a definer of goals. The only force in human life which can effectively direct man toward the right objectives is religion. And the religion best fitted to perform this task is Islam.

This is because Islam, unchanged and unchanging offers man the best hopes of permanence, stability and rectitude in his life. It is the linchpin of his culture and of his entire civilization.

Unique Ability

Paradise has been described in great detail in the Qur'an. The gist of this description is to be found in the verse which says that 'Paradise will have everything that man would like to have and what will be pleasing to his eyes.'

Of all the living beings created by God, man is unique in having the perception of pleasure. For man, God created a Paradise where he could live an eternal life amidst objects specially provided for his pleasure.

The sense of pleasure is, indeed, one of the most wonderful gifts of God. And it is only man who has been endowed with this capacity. Compare him with the robot, designed to perform all the routine tasks a man does – a triumph of modern technology! Yet incapable of deriving any pleasure whatsoever from its actions or environment. No machine, in fact, is capable of enjoyment. It is only the human being who has the ability to enjoy himself.

Pleasure here has been used in the best sense of the word and covers a much wider range of meaning than trivial amusement. Man derives pleasure not only from the material aspects of life but also from all good happenings. When a man does a good job, when he finds a neat solution to a problem, he feels immense pleasure. But take the computer. It will produce correct answers to thousands of questions, but will not know how to feel happy about this.

In Paradise, everything will be of unsurpassable perfection, just as the man who enters Paradise will be metamorphosed into a perfect being. Every activity whether it is talking, touching, seeing, hearing or walking about will become a source of unlimited pleasure.

5 October-November 1992

The simpler the ceremony, the greater the blessing

Aishah reports the Prophet as saying: "The marriage which is most blest is that which has been least burdensome."

(al-Baihaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubra*)

Rejecting Divine Truth

Truth is a matter of divine revelation. The Qur'an states this specifically in the second and third verses of the forty fifth *Surah*:

The revelation
Of the Book
Is from Allah
The Exalted in Power,
Full of Wisdom.
Verily in the heavens
And the earth, are Signs
for those who believe.

Subsequent verses give details of God's manifold signs, but make it clear that people who are arrogant will learn nothing from them. They also give fair warning that one who 'takes them in jest' can expect 'a humiliating penalty.' (Verse 9)

What are those things which, according to the Qur'an, are not taken seriously? One example is that of the 19 angels standing guard over Hell. (74:30). In the time of the Prophet, certain non-believers, ignoring the crux of the matter, chose to ridicule the figure of 19. There was a wrestler among them who said, 'There are only 19 of them. I can cast them down single handed.'

The insensitive and arrogant resort to ridicule in order to shun the truth. They ignore the *ayah* and make much of what is irrelevant. Such scoffers are the worst culprits in the eyes of God.

The acceptance of truth is always at the cost of self-abnegation. It entails a change in one's way of thinking and a necessary subjugation of one's desires; it means the forgoing of exalted positions and the voluntary acceptance of a lonely station in life. Man is hardly ever ready to wage this greater *jihad*. At the same time he does not want to be labeled as one who rejects the truth. That is why he resorts to derision so that others may feel that what he has rejected is not in any case worth accepting.

But it should be borne in mind that those who reject the divine truth will themselves stand rejected in the world of the hereafter, and those who are rejected by God are doomed for all eternity.

Two Ways

According to Abdullah Bin Amr, God's Messenger said, 'Not one of you can become a believer unless his desires are subjugated by what I have brought.' (i.e. the *Shariah*)

This *hadith* tells us that there are two ways to act in this world. One is to be led by our desires. The other is to be guided by 'what the Prophet has brought.'

Suppose you are confronted with the truth, and you know in your heart of hearts that what stares you in the face is the truth, yet you are afraid to acknowledge it. Consciously or unconsciously, you feel that by doing so your position will in some way be diminished. If, falling a prey to your own desires you deny it, you are taking the baser course. Accept it, abiding by 'what the Prophet has brought', and you are on the way to Paradise.

Again, if someone criticises you, your ego is hurt. You become angry. Now is the time to remember what the *Shariah* tells you – do not be arrogant, be humble. If you respond to the criticism with humility, you act in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet. But if, on the contrary, you become arrogant, you are but the slave of your own desires.

Suppose someone behaves in a reprehensible manner, and you become enraged. This is the moment to think of what the *Shariah* tells you about avoiding confrontation, even in the face of provocation. If you remain patient, despite being provoked, you act in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet. But if, instead, you start fighting, you are only submitting to your own base nature. The same is true of all situations in life. Two options are always available to us. Exercise the right option, and your name will be listed among the believers in God's record. If you take the other option, you can have no hope of ever entering into this coveted category.

Simple Identification

According to Anas Bin Malik, God's Messenger said, 'Not one of you can become a true believer until he has reached the stage of liking for his brother what he likes for himself.' (AI Bukhari and Muslim).

This hadith demonstrates very simply what the attitude of a Muslim should be towards other human beings, i.e. what he wants for himself should be what he wants for others too.

No one likes rudeness. Everyone appreciates being addressed politely. This very fact should serve as a main guideline. One should never be harsh, but should invariably speak with concern for others' feelings.

Similarly, if a man is denied what is rightfully his, he will resent it immensely. Why should we not bear this in mind, and always remember to give others their due? We should not deny anyone what is his by right.

When a promise is not kept, the person to whom the promise was made feels hurt. There is a lesson in this for everyone. We should never, for any reason, go back on our promises, but should always do our utmost to keep them.

If a person's interests are hurt, he becomes upset. This is something which he should remember when dealing with others. He must ensure that others' interests never suffer through any fault of his. He must, on the contrary, strive to promote others' interests to the same extent as his own.

A believer is a man of sensitivity. It is this sensitivity which compels him to be the type of man he wants others to be in their dealings with him.

8 October-November 1992

One who fears God holds his tongue

On being asked to give someone good advice, Abdullah said, "Be content with what you have in your house, hold your tongue and shed some tears when you recall your sins."

(Hilyat al-Auliya)

Religion and Science

In his review of Jagjit Singh's biography of Nobel laureate Dr. 'Abdus Salam (HT, August 8, 1992), Mr. Dilip Salwi states that 'Indian scientists are often believed to have split personalities. When they are in the laboratories, they follow the rules of science, the scientific methodology, and the culture of doubting things, which is the crux of science, and when they are at home, they are highly religious, follow all the religious traditions and have complete faith in God and religion. It is believed that this split personality or dichotomy is responsible for their inability to produce first rate science and win major international accolades like the Nobel Prize.'

In my view, there is little logic in the contention that India's scientists fail to reach the top because they happen also to be men of firm religious persuasions: whether or not this constitutes having a dual personality or a dichotomous lifestyle is immaterial. What does need to be clearly understood is that science per se, when correctly defined, does not testify to religion being an obstacle to reaching the top rungs of the scientific ladder. Just consider how many luminaries of the West, besides being scientists by profession, have shown strong religious proclivities in their private lives; the more notable examples being Isaac Newton, Arthur Eddington, James Jeans and Albert Einstein.

The same holds true for the arts. Many distinguished scientists have been keenly interested in music, painting and diverse other art forms, but this has in no way detracted from their abilities as scientific thinkers. Although science is based on mathematics and calculation, and art is based on imagination and personal taste, these two spheres are more complementary than diametrically opposed in the cultivated mind. Scientists have never had any difficulty in being scientists in the laboratory and art lovers at home. By the same token, it is also quite possible to be religiously and scientifically inclined at one and the same time.

Another point, or rather, flimsy supposition, made by Mr. Salwi, which it is even more urgent to expose as baseless, is that 'the culture of doubting things is the crux of science', while religion implies unquestioning faith. If this were really so, science and religion would be at opposite poles. But the 'doubting' method, I would emphasize, is only the starting point of scientific thinking. That is certainly not its final destination.

Beginning from the doubting stage, the scientist proceeds on his journey, ultimately coming to the point of belief. Science, at its final stage, is just as much a matter of total belief as religion is.

When a scientist begins to follow a particular line of thought, he uses observation and experiment to direct, develop and verify his original thinking. But it has also come to be accepted that as a scientist progresses with his investigations, he eventually reaches a stage where observation and experiment no

longer bear fruit-and this in spite of a whole universe of facts lying unexplored before him. He has to face the fact that his own human limitation bars any further progress, so that he must either give up his research, or change his methods. Stopping his research is out of the question because he would then never be able to discover anything truly meaningful. He must proceed at all costs from doubt to conviction.

This is why all modern scientists have altered their methodology. That is to say that they have had to accept the indirect along with the direct method of research. Without this, too many facets of our physical existence would remain unexplored. This is why inferential argument has been accepted in modern times as being as valid as direct argument.

For instance, modern nuclear physics is based entirely on inferential argument. If the inferential method were to be subtracted from scientific procedure, the science of nuclear physics would cease to exist.

The same is true of organic evolution. The notion of the gradual evolution of species, which progressed from being regarded as a hypothesis to being accepted as a scientific fact, is based on events which have never been even partially observed. Not even once. This notwithstanding, this theory is considered to be 'scientific'. This became possible only because the indirect method came to be accepted in science along with the direct method.

With the acknowledgement of this reality why should it be of any special relevance whether the scientist who believes in religion has a dual personality or not? If such a person is to be described as having a dual personality, then the totally non-religious scientist would also have to be similarly described, for science accepts certain things by direct argument, 'while accepting certain other things by indirect argument.'

Seen in this light, the position of religion is not that of an unscientific creed. The religious adherent must go through the same mental processes to arrive at a set of valid beliefs as the scientist must apply to his own and others' findings. There is no fundamental difference between the two approaches.

I myself am a religious person, yet I always attach proper importance to the scientific way of thinking. Before coming to any conclusions, I first collected all available data on religion and subjected it to thorough analysis. Exactly the same method is adapted in the field of science as we understand it today. By pursuing the same course I reached a point where I found that there exists no direct link between the point under investigation and the known data. Here I employed the principle of inference. That is, on the basis of observable facts, I postulated a reality which was not observable, then judged it by the norms of logic before reaching any definite conclusions about it.

I can therefore say of myself, with conviction, that on the one hand, I am a completely religious person, while on the other; my way of thinking is entirely scientific.

I do not think I could be described as having a dual personality. I would say rather that my personality is well integrated.

In the light of this personal experience, I am perhaps not in error when I say that the scientists who are religious are scientists as well as men of religion in the full sense of the word. Sir James Jeans, Dr. Abdus Salam and many others of that august fraternity must have trodden the same path towards belief. That is, they must have arrived at religious truth only after making a scientific survey of all available data.

11 October-November 1992

Meditation the greatest of activities

Abdullah ibn Utbah once asked Darda's mother how her husband had spent most of his time. "In meditation, and learning a lesson from everything that happened," she replied.

(Hilyat al-Auliya)

Consultation in Islam

In a verse of the *Qur'an* which enumerates the virtues that the Prophet must display to his followers, (e.g. being gentle and forgiving), it is specifically mentioned that he must consult them on all important issues (3: 159). Verse 38 of the 42nd Surah stresses, furthermore, how imperative it is for Muslims, if they are to have God's blessings, to consult each other before embarking upon any significant course of action.

The Prophet certainly obeyed God's commandments in this respect, for it has been recorded that Ayesha said, 'I have not seen anyone who consult others as the Messenger of Allah did.' (*At Tafsir Ai Mazhari*)

Abu Hurayrah, a companion of the Prophet, is recorded as having made a similar statement, (*Tafsir Ai Kashshaf*), while Hasan Basri expressed the view that 'whenever a group of people consult among themselves, they are bound to arrive at a consensus'.

(*Safwat Ai Tafasir*)

Consultation provides the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge and experiences of different individuals, and this helps in arriving at a better decision. If those who seek council are honest in their quest, and their advisors are serious about helping them, then consultation is an extremely fruitful procedure. In fact, there is no step better calculated to save us from disaster.

A good counselor must deliberate before speaking, and should not insist on pressing his views. The other party should take equal care not to allow the matter in hand to become a prestige issue. Even if someone speaks against him, he should listen with an open mind. When under attacks, he must be ready to ignore the tone and tenor of the criticism, and pay attention only to its substance.

If this simple principle is understood by both the parties, consultation, or, at least, dialogue, will undoubtedly prove beneficial and helpful in arriving at the correct decision. This applies to individuals, to groups and even to whole communities.

Consultation is the way of Islam. It holds the key to success.

Sincerity in Faith

According to Zaid Bin Arqam, God's Messenger declared that whoever said with sincerity that there was no God but Allah would enter Paradise. When asked what was meant by 'Sincerity', he replied that it meant seriousness. (*Ikhlās*) The Prophet added that the words, 'There is no God but Allah', would protect the utterer from the things forbidden by Allah. (*At-Targhib wa at Tarheeb*)

Once a man truly grasps the reality that no one is worthy of worship except God, and he accepts this truth in all sincerity, his change of heart will necessarily manifest itself in all his deeds and assertions. His new found seriousness of purpose will be reflected in the virtue of his actions.

When a man says that there is no God but Allah, he is, in effect, expressing his discovery that all glory in the universe is God's glory. Once in possession of this truth, he embarks on a life of profound sincerity.

When a man discovers Allah in all His grandeur and perfection, he also discovers his own weakness and limitations. This revelation creates in him a sense of reverence. He is overcome by his feelings of gratitude for the favours bestowed upon him by his Creator. The thought of facing his Lord after death makes him extremely cautious in what he says and does; the culmination of such experience is sincerity: caution is the mark of the sincere individual.

Such absolute sincerity prevents a man from disobeying God's dictates and indulging in what has been forbidden him. For the truly honest man, there is never any discrepancy between what he says and what he does. The man who accepts God in all earnestness will find that his deeds will bear out his verbal commitments. His promise will be matched by his performance.

13 October-November 1992

Remaining silent is, in itself, a good deed

“Keep silent unless you have something good to say,” said the Prophet.

A Mistake

Paul went to the Zoo with his father, 'Buy an animal for me', he begged. 'Where would we get his food' asked the father. The boy replied, 'Buy one of those where it says on the cage: 'No feeding.'

The little boy had mistakenly applied the directions meant for the visitors to the animals in the cage. This of course, was just a childish mistake. But, strangely enough, you will find many other people who have the same propensity to misconstrue and therefore to misapply.

Thirty years ago, a Muslim intellectual wrote a book on the subject of 'Islamic Socialism' in which he claimed that the earth could not be in man's possession. Quoting the Qur'an which says 'The Earth is God's,—he asked how it could possibly be possessed by man. In this no doubt, he had been influenced by Marxist philosophy, according to which nothing belongs to the individual.

His argument resulted from a poor understanding of the subject. What was propounded in the Quranic verse in relation to God was misapplied by the Muslim intellectual to man. There is, of course, no doubt that vis-à-vis God, no one can be the possessor of the earth. But there certainly are possession rights between man and man, and these are clearly laid down by the Shariah.

This is quite a common mistake. Now-a-days, many are led astray by being unable to place things in their correct context. Consistent efforts need to be made to do so, for out-of-context statements can take on quite a different meaning from the original. Even the words of God and His Prophet are no exception to this rule.

14 October-November 1992

Learning from everything that happens

A cart pulled by two oxen, drove past Abu Darda. He watched as one of the oxen carried on pulling while the other stopped. "There is a lesson even in this," said Abu Darda. "The one that stopped was whipped, while the other was left alone."

(Safawat al-Safawah)

Seeing the Best in Others

Those who eschew Evil and fall not into its worship and turn to God (in repentance) for them is Good News: So announce the Good News to My servants. Those who listen to the word and follow the best (meaning) in it: Those are the ones whom God has guided and those are the ones endowed with understanding (Qur'an, 39: 17-18).

The present world is one of trial, and, as such has much in it over which a veil of doubt is cast. Moreover, the mode of communication throughout the world being that of the human tongue, there is always room for misinterpretation.

But men of understanding, who have been thoroughly chastened by the fear of God, are careful to place the right construction upon anything they hear. They are not carried away by superficial meanings, but go deeper into whatever is said. This trait in them leads to their placing things in their correct context and ultimately arriving at their true significance.

On the contrary, those whose hearts are untroubled by the fear of God and who have, therefore, had no share in divine wisdom, place their own interpretation on everything they hear. With utter disregard for truth they twist and willfully misinterpret the words of others. Such people will always go in want of God's guidance.

Quoting others out of context, to their detriment, is equally to follow in Satan's footsteps. True servants of God always first determine the precise meaning of what others say. They invariably give the benefit of the doubt, putting the best and not the worst construction on others' utterances.

15 October-November 1992

Two eyes that shall be saved from the Fire

“There are two eyes that the Fire shall not touch,” said the Prophet Mohammad. “One is an eye that has wept in fear of God, and the other is an eye that has spent the night keeping a vigil in the path of God.”

The Best Wealth

When this verse was revealed in the Qur'an: They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God unto them give tidings of a painful doom (9:34). Then the Prophet said: 'Woe to gold, woe to silver.' When the companions of the Prophet learned of this they were upset. They began to ask one another. What things they were going to store then. At that time Umar was with them. Umar said, if you like I can put this matter to the Prophet. Everyone agreed, so Umar went to the Prophet and said, the companions are saying, 'could we but learn which kind of wealth is better, we would store that and no other. The Prophet said: All of you should possess tongue which remembers God, a heart that thanks God and a wife that helps him in his path.' (*T'afsir ibn Kathir*, Vol. II, p. 351). Another version has used the word 'hereafter' for faith.

One has to lose in order to gain

Kaab ibn Ujrah relates how one day he came before the Prophet and, noticing the marks of strain on his face, he asked him what was troubling him. The Prophet replied that for three days his stomach had had nothing to fill it. Kaab then went out and found employment with a local Jew. He had to give water to the Jew's camel and in return for each bucketful, he received one date. When he had a collection of dates he came before the Prophet, who asked him where he had found them. After he had explained how he came by them, the Prophet said, "Kaab, tell me, have you any love for me?" Kaab's answer was that he would sacrifice his own dear father and mother for the sake of the Prophet. "Do you know the fate of one who loves God and His Prophet?" asked the Prophet. "Poverty, which will overtake him even more swiftly than flood waters streaming down a hillside."

(Al-Taoarani)

The Religion of Islam

The religion of the universe is Islam. From the very moment of its creation, it was destined by its Creator to have Islam as its religion. The Universe had, therefore, to follow the path of total submission to God. It could not deviate in the slightest from the divine will.

Later, when man was created and inhabited the earth, he too was commanded to lead his life in total obedience to the will of God. Total surrender to God was and still is the only religion for both Man and the Universe.

There is a difference, however, in the respective courses pursued by man and the Universe. The latter, having been created in a state of total subjugation to the divine will, has no option but to follow God's commands. It cannot deviate from the divine path by so much as an inch. Man, on the other hand, is a creature endowed with free will and enjoys certain limited powers. As such, he is expected – unlike the Universe – to follow the path of submission to God as a matter of moral choice.

The Universe with all its vastness is a unity. That is, all of its functions are geared to a single unified system. In this way, it demonstrates its following of the one God. The same is required of man. He must have faith in the one God - but of his own free will. All his thinking must be cast in a monotheistic mould.

Right from the humble bee to the solar system, all the parts which make up the vast array of the Universe continue to function with awesome meaningfulness as if receiving commands from some superior power. These commands came in the form of revelation (*wahy*). To man, God's message has been revealed through His Prophets. Man must seek guidance through these revelations and then conduct himself accordingly.

The whole' Universe is in a state of prostration before God, a manifestation of which is the shadows we see everywhere. The loftiest of mountains, the tallest of trees prostrate themselves before their Creator by casting their shadows on the ground. Man is required to do likewise. He must fall in prostration before his Lord: worshipping God should become food for his soul.

There are countless objects in the Universe, all of which are in a constant state of motion. Yet they never clash with one another. Each part functions in complete co-ordination with the others. The same is required of man. Each individual must work in absolute harmony with society. Every man must achieve his aim in life in full co-ordination with others.

The Universe functions on the principle of mutual benefaction. Each element of the Universe performs in such a way as to profit from the other elements. The same principle, i.e., the benefiting of others, has to be adopted by man in his life in this world. His activities must invariably be aimed at others' welfare.

The whole Universe is of a predictable character, the function of each element being precisely calculable in advance. Man is required to be similar in nature. That is to say that his reactions in any given situation should be foreseeable. For this, he has to be a man of principle.

Each element of the Universe functions within certain limits. Each star, for example remains in its own orbit, never trespassing on the orbits of other heavenly bodies. The same is required of man. He must strictly adhere to the limits set for him. He should never encroach on another's sphere. Every man must live with the consciousness that his sphere ends where the sphere of another begins.

God's will in regard to man has been brought to mankind by the Prophet in the form of divine revelation. Islam is its description in words, just as the Universe is its demonstration in practice. As such, Islam is the final and standard edition of our Creator's revelation of His will.

18 October-November 1992

The Companions worshipped by thinking of God and the Hereafter

When Abu Dhar died, a certain man rode from Basra to Medina just to find out from his wife what the nature of her late husband's worship had been. "He used to spend the whole day alone, engrossed in thought," she told him.

(Hilyat al-Auliya)

The Acquisition of Knowledge

A tradition recorded by *Sahih* Muslim on the authority of Abdullah ibn Yahya ibn abi Kathir, in the chapter on 'Mosques and Prayer Times' runs as follows:

'I have heard my father say,' said Abdullah ibn Yahya ibn Abi Kathir, 'that the acquisition of knowledge did not go hand in hand with physical comfort.'

Leaving aside the fact that this tradition has been somewhat unaccountably included under the heading of *Salat*, it is nevertheless important because it emphasises the necessity for perseverance in the pursuit of knowledge. Deep insights in the realms of knowledge are certainly not attainable unless one fully devotes oneself to the task, sacrificing one's leisure and comfort in the process.

Knowledge cannot be attained without a great deal of study and investigation. When one is truly engaged in the pursuit, one is plunged into a whole new world of preoccupation, in which one automatically sacrifices certain physical requirements like food, sleep and rest. Without this one cannot affectively pursue a course of study and research. Thus, a true seeker after knowledge comes to hold all practical requirements as secondary, if he is fully to submerge himself in the ocean of knowledge. But those who launch themselves on such a course are unaware of hardship. What seems like hardship to others is, to them a matter of complete inconsequence. Once deeply engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, they find the experience so rewarding that that in itself is a compensation for lost comforts.

The physical comfort sacrificed is, indeed, of little importance when compared with their much greater psychological gain.

This is what makes all the discomforts suffered in the pursuit of knowledge acceptable. The dedicated student willingly bears the loss of small things, like ease and leisure, in the knowledge that what he has acquired in the process is much greater.

Paying for Frivolity

Some there are who would gladly pay for a frivolous tale, so that in their ignorance they may mislead others from the path of God and make fun of it. For these we have prepared a shameful punishment (31:6)

“But there are, among men,
Those who purchase idle tales,
Without knowledge or meaning,
To mislead men from the Path
Of Allah and throw ridicule
(On the Path): for such
There will be a humiliating
Penalty”. (*Qur'an* 31:6).

When the truth is revealed and people are urged to acknowledge it, there is always a section of the public who will come forward to declare their acceptance of it. These are the open-minded; openhearted individuals for whom the call of truth has great appeal. Free from psychological complications, and with no thought of underhandedness, they willingly accept the truth. Then, by divine guidance, they enter the ranks of God's chosen servants.

There is another section of the public, however, which is marred by haughtiness. For them, acceptance of the truth becomes impossible because of their feelings of superiority. They find it inconsistent with their station in life to respond to a call of truth which has neither past grandeur attaching to it, nor the power to further exalt their positions. So they ignore it.

But they are not content with the mere rejection of truth. They must justify their option. This is why (according to the above-quoted verse) they deliberately mislead others and attempt to frighten them away from the truth.

The commonest ways of doing this are to evade the issue and instead keep up a barrage of taunts aimed at the *dayee*, to resort to fault-finding instead of applying logic, and to make such allegations against the *dayee* as will cause his message to be distorted.

Resorting to such measures against the truth is as ineffective as raising a wall of sand to contain the mighty waters of a flood.

Why I Embraced Islam

By Syed Mahmood Akhtar

Saudi Arabia being a country where people of all religions converge from all over the world to earn their livelihood, the Government has set up Islamic Centres in nearly every big city in the Kingdom, where not only is there abundance of Islamic literature freely available, but also many religious Scholars and other learned professionals working assiduously to carry the message of Islam to non-Muslims. They extend their activities by forming deputations which visit different companies for the purpose of conveying the word of God to the officials and employees working there. This modus operandi has had very encouraging results in that many non-Muslims are turning to Islam.

In the same field, the services of the Rab-tai-' Alam-i-Islami are praiseworthy. It publishes translations of a number of Islamic books in different languages of the world. It also holds weekly lectures on Islam, to which non-Muslims are regularly invited. At present the Philipinos constitute the bulk of the new converts.

Recently, in the City of Al-Kharj, adjacent to Riyadh, an Indian Hindu intellectual, Dr Mahinder Singh, Ph.D., and two Philipinos embraced Islam. The Pakistan Muslim League, Al-Kharf, held an enthusiastic reception in their honour. Mr Sulayman 'Abdullah, Director of the Islamic Centre, was the guest of honour, and the function was chaired by Mr Abdul Hammed Abu Farooq, convener of the Muslim League.'

While addressing the participants, Mr. Sulayman 'Abdullah paid a tribute to the new converts and wholeheartedly welcomed them to the fold of Islam; He said that Islam was the only religion which, if rightly acted upon, could guarantee peace and prosperity in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. He advised the new converts to follow Islam as a way of life.'

Dr Mahinder Singh, whose Islamic name is now Dr Muhammed Mustafa, said that he had been attached to the department of education for the last 25 years. He was thankful to God, who had blessed him and guided him into accepting Islam, thus bestowing upon him the opportunity to die as a Muslim.

Describing his family background, Dr Mustafa said that there were four temples near his house in India. One day he asked his father, who was then 82 years of age, why it was that although he professed Hinduism, he was never to be seen going to worship in the temple. His father replied, 'O my son! There is a god in every temple. I do not know whom to worship.' While still a Hindu, Dr Mustafa" asked his father why he did not accept Islam. His father replied that as a Muslim he would not have the courage to face Society. Dr Mustafa told the audience that on many occasions he had seen his father reciting Qur'an Majeed. He said, moreover, that during the course of his studies in America he had made a

thorough study of Christianity and the Bible. However, certain questions relating to them had caused doubts to arise in his mind. He put these questions to the priests, but they could not give him any suitable answers except that, according to Christianity, he might commit any sin, and be forgiven for it, provided he sacrificed an animal.

Dr. Muhammed Mustafa explained that after completing his education in America, he had returned to India and that now, for the last five years, he had been in Saudi Arabia, where he had studied Islam in the proper way. The questions which had previously baffled him had all been answered to his full satisfaction in the second chapter of the Qur'an.

Before embracing Islam, he consulted his wife in India in the telephone. She advised him to wait for another five years until their children were all married. He replied that it was already too late for him – he was now 56 years of age – and that the span of his life was not at all certain. Who knew if he could stay alive for another five years? He was, therefore, entrusting his affairs to God Almighty, who would surely solve all his problems.

And thus Dr Mahinder Singh embraced the faith of Islam and became Dr Muhammed Mustafa. He said that his house in India was situated near a Masjid (mosque) but that he preferred to take the opportunity of accepting Islam in Saudi Arabia. He added that he had done his Ph.D. - but to no avail. He would prefer to memorise the Qur'an Majeed in its stead.

(Courtesy: *Jang*, Karachi)

Why Do Muslims Feel Insecure?

Whether a community feels secure or insecure is a wholly relative matter, depending as it does upon the actions of the concerned community, rather than on external circumstances. Its position in Society, secure or insecure, is determined by its own behaviour.

Compare, for example, the Christian communities of India and Sudan. Both are tiny minorities; the former comprising three percent of the Indian population and the latter just two percent of the Sudanese population. It might be expected that such small minorities would live with a feeling of unease vis-à-vis the overwhelming majorities of their respective countries, and this is certainly true of the Sudanese Christians, who are dogged by a sense of insecurity. The Indian Christians, on the contrary, feel themselves fully secure.

What is the reason for this difference? It is because the Indian Christians were fortunate enough to have been guided by their leaders into non-controversial, constructive fields, and, as a result of their strivings over a period of 200 years they have managed to build an educational empire in India. Moreover, health and welfare institutions set up by them are now widespread and functioning on a large scale, while the whole country is dotted with their religious establishments.

All these factors have ensured the safeguarding of Christian community interests in the country. The Christian community has thus managed to figure more prominently on the national scene than its small percentage of the total population would seemingly warrant. It is its very usefulness as a community which has ruled out any question of insecurity.

The Christian Community in Sudan is quite differently situated.

Its leaders, interested more in politics than in constructive activities, launched a movement aimed at separating a part of Sudan from the rest of the country in order to carve out an independent Christian State. This policy gave rise to hostilities between the Christian Community on the one hand, and the majority and the Government on the other hand. Strict measures were then taken to crush the secessionists. Far from resulting in a separate Christian State, all that this political confrontation achieved was a spate of protests and complaints against the Government by the writers and speakers of the Christian Community. If they are now a backward and insecure minority in Sudan, it is for the simple reason that their efforts have always been confrontational rather than constructive.

Indian Muslims are in a similar, if not worse situation, although the problem is of a much greater magnitude in the north of India, where their feeling of insecurity is most intense. Recurring communal riots are the greatest indication of this feeling, but it is the Muslim Community itself which is the worst hit on these occasions, as was evident in the horrific communal riots which broke out after 1947 in North India, particularly in U.P. and Bihar.

The South Indian Muslims do not suffer from such feelings of insecurity as would lead to the outbreak of

rioting. The only occurrences of rioting in South Indian cities have been when one or more north Indian Muslims, having found their way into the region, have created a tense atmosphere with their provocative speeches. Even then, such disturbances have been on a very small scale.

On the whole, it would be true to say that while a feeling of insecurity is commonplace in the north, the South is free of it, and therefore free, too, of rioting.

This dichotomy is on an exact parallel with the example of the Sudanese and Indian Christians. The large doses of politics administered respectively by their leaders to the Sudanese Christians and north Indian Muslims have led first to emotionalism and then to communal disaster.

South India presents quite the opposite picture. In this region, Islam was spread through merchants and travelers, in contrast to north India, where Islam was brought by rulers and soldiers. This is why the South Indian Muslims, unlike their brothers in the north, have never been swayed by emotional politics. Instead of flexing their muscles in political arenas, they have always exerted themselves in non-controversial fields like commerce and education. In this way, constructive traditions have been established among the Muslims of this region.

It is this difference in northern and southern attitudes which accounts for the Muslims in one part of the country being a prey to insecurity while the Muslims of another part continue to live in peace and security.

The only way for the Muslims of North India to banish this atmosphere of insecurity is to tread the same path as their South Indian co-religionists. That is, they must give up confrontation in favour of co-existence and adjustments.

For example, Muslims should neither obstruct Hindu processions nor should they become incensed when processionists raise provocative slogans. If Muslims fail to receive their due share of admissions to educational institutions, or of employment in Government Service, they should refrain from wasting their time in making protests and complaints and, instead, should work harder to improve themselves to the point where it will become impossible to ignore or reject them.

Wherever problems exist, opportunities also exist side by side with them. This is just as true of India as of any other country. But full use cannot be made of these opportunities unless the problems are thrust firmly into the background to grasp an opportunity which is the only way to success.

One receives in direct proportion to what one gives. This is a principle which Indian Muslims should never lose sight of. Rather than be as a group which does nothing but protest, they should become renowned for their creativity. In this way, they will become a viable force in the country. But this can only happen when they realize, once and for all, that nothing is ever achieved by political confrontations, demonstrations, etc., except the awakening of national prejudice, and all the negativism and destructiveness which flows therefrom.

If the Muslims of Northern India can make such changes in their policy, the whole vitiated atmosphere will undergo a radical change for the better. A whole new world will come into existence. It will be just as if the problem of insecurity had never existed.